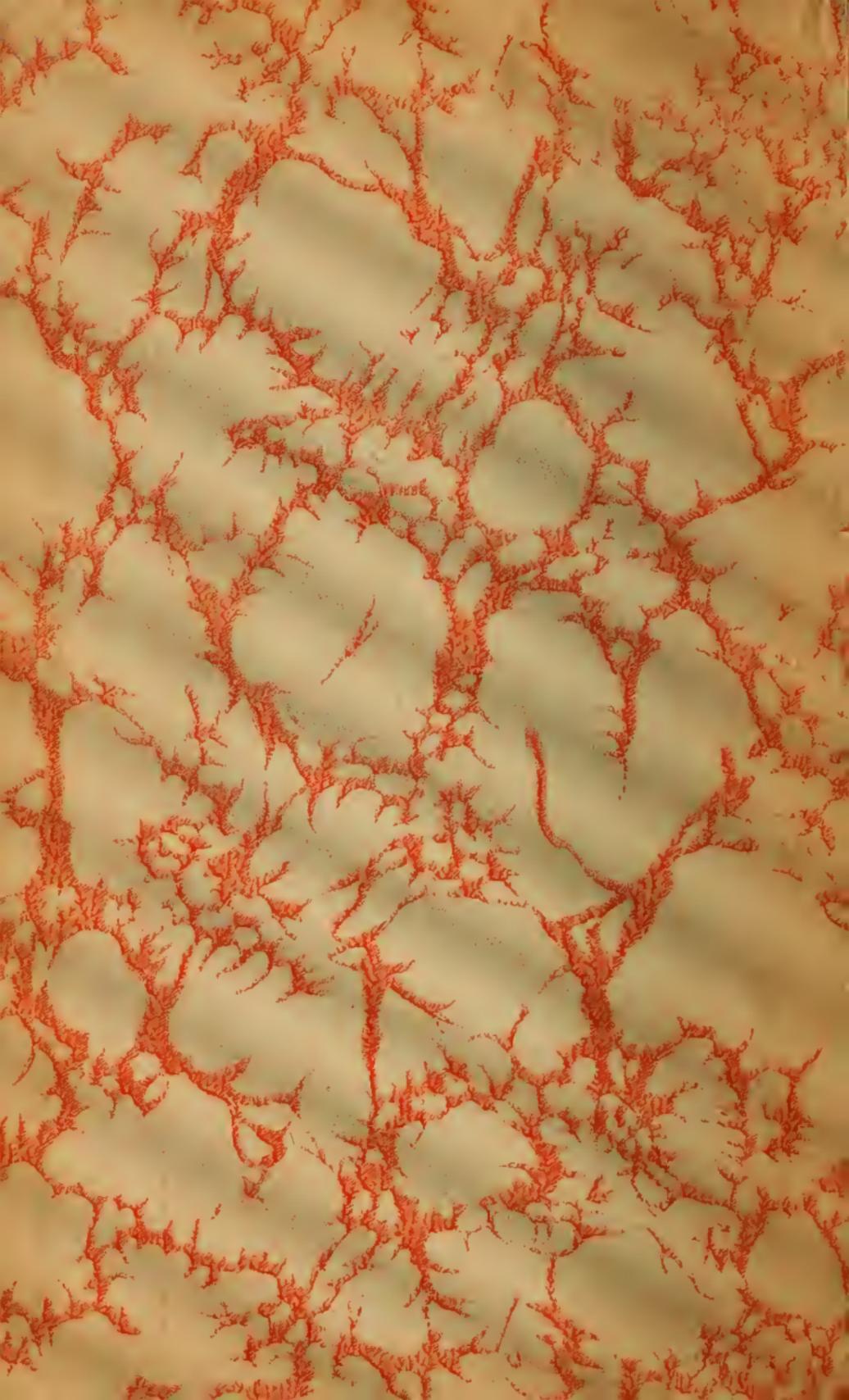


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LETTERS  
CONCERNING THE WAR

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BETWEEN AN AMERICAN AND A  
RELATIVE IN GERMANY

MARCH—JUNE, 1915



LETTERS  
CONCERNING THE WAR

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*March-June, 1915*

PRIVATELY PRINTED

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E X P L A N A T O R Y   N O T E

Some months ago a leading American lawyer, while visiting Paris, was discussing with a group of prominent Frenchmen the attitude and sympathies of various Americans towards the nations engaged in the European War.

The discussion turned toward the disposition of Mr. Y. of New York. Some one said that he assumed that his sympathies and views were pro-German, because of his German ancestry and his business connections in Germany.

"Oh, no," spoke up one of the distinguished Frenchmen present. "I happen to know the contrary to be the fact, because I have recently seen a long and comprehensive letter from Mr. Y. to a relative in Germany, in which he showed not only pronounced sympathy for the Allies, but a thorough understanding of their cause, and scathingly arraigned the German Government and policy."

It appears that this letter had been singled out in the operation of the censorship of letters between the United States and Germany and had been brought to the attention of official representatives of the Allied Governments. It should be

noted that at the time the letter was written, namely in the early part of 1915, the censorship of letters between the United States and Germany had not yet been officially established, and it was believed that only correspondence from and to suspected persons and firms was being opened, and the writer had no reason to expect that this particular letter would come under the scrutiny of the censor.

The American lawyer, upon returning to New York, related to Mr. Y. the incident of the conversation and asked to be allowed to read a copy of the letter in question. Having perused it, he urged Mr. Y. to have it printed. In accordance with the suggestion, the letter, together with the correspondence which preceded it, is reprinted, for private distribution, in the following pages.

NOTE—These letters were written, originally, in the German language. The translation here given has been made by "Y." The sub-divisions have been made only for the convenience of the reader.





A LETTER FROM AMERICA

New York, March 22, 1915.

Dear X.:

The remarkable efficiency, power of organization and executive ability, the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism, the courage and strength which the German people have shown, during this war, are receiving the tribute of universal admiration—even that of their enemies. It is these and similar qualities and characteristics which, before the war, were bringing Germany nearer day by day to economic world-hegemony. Assuming the undiminished preservation of these qualities and characteristics, that position, together with its attendant influences and advantages, would assuredly in due course of time have come to be hers, *without war*.

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What induced Germany to throw overboard, suddenly, the well tested methods so long and ably sustained of peaceful, but none the less real, conquest which had brought her success beyond all precedent and parallel, and, instead, to stake on the terrible card of war all that she had thus far achieved, and all the brilliant prospects that were in sight, is absolutely inexplicable to me—even eliminating the question of right or wrong, and viewing the matter purely from the standpoint of national advantage.

A war of Prevention?

Bismarck has warned against “Trying to look into the cards in the hands of Providence.”

And prevention against whom?

Only Russia can come in question. The English and French governments would never have received the sanction

of their respective parliaments to undertake an aggressive war against Germany. Moreover, the military strength of these latter countries as compared with Germany would not, presumably, in two, three, or more years have been relatively greater than it was eight months ago.

Admitting that Russia was preparing for war, and that she might in a few years have considered herself strong enough to pick a quarrel with Germany—the course of the present war, so far as it has gone, proves—if indeed proof were needed—that Germany with her enormous superiority in efficiency, planning, leadership, etc., needed to have had no misgiving as to the ultimate outcome of an attack on her by Russia.

I cannot conceive that Germany so underestimated her own power or so over-estimated that of the “giant with feet of clay,” that she precipitated a

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world war as a measure of protection against Russia. Admitting again that the Russians on some pretext or other, might have provoked war at a moment believed by them to be propitious, France would have joined, if at all, only reluctantly, half-heartedly and with her public opinion divided, while the electorate of England would never have allowed their government to take active part in such a war.

On the 30th of July, Austria at last declared herself ready to enter into direct discussion with Russia. She thus offered a breathing spell and a chance for the preservation of peace.

If Germany had waited but three days after that declaration by her ally before delivering her ultimatum to Russia, either the war would have been avoided altogether, or Russia would have had to face the world as the aggressor. And

it would be an insult to Germany's efficiency to question that she could have found measures short of rushing into war, to meet and offset for another three days the menace of Russian mobilization.

You are mistaken in attributing the present sentiment of America to prejudiced or untrue press reports from London or Paris. The American people are fully informed with respect to the German standpoint and German views.

Our papers publish daily the official German reports. Many have special correspondents in Germany whose reports are for the most part of pro-German tendency. All of them are continually publishing extracts from German papers and articles of German authorship. To-day, for instance, the New York Times prints Dr. Helferich's long exposé on "The Responsibility for

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the War'' in literal translation from the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung; and the New York Sun publishes two exhaustive articles by General von Bernhardt on the causes and the course of the war up to the present moment.

As a matter of fact, the popular trend of public opinion in America before the war was rather pro-German than pro-English.

During the last ten years a steadily increasing number of Americans had come to know Germany from personal observation. They had returned home enthusiastic and filled with admiration for Germany's greatness and her progressive development.

In various activities characteristic of Germany's spirit and methods—as for instance her social legislation, the scientific organization of industry, municipal administration, the stage, and in many

other ways—she was acknowledged to be leading the world and to have set up models for other nations to follow.

That public sympathy in America has now come to bear preponderantly an anti-German stamp is largely attributable to the following two causes:

First: The blood-guilt for this horrible war is laid at Germany's door.

Germany rejected Sir Edward Grey's invitation to a conference. Germany sent the ultimatum to Russia which was tantamount to starting war. Germany declared war on France.

The large majority of Americans believe that if, at the critical moment, she had thrown her sword into the scale for the preservation of peace, no nation on earth would have dared to begin war. Had she chosen to do so, Germany would have stood forth as a mightier,

more admired and more influential nation than ever before.

Second: The violation of Belgium and the ruthless treatment of her population.

The circumstance that some years back an exchange of ideas had taken place between an English military attache and Belgian military authorities, with a view to certain eventualities, is not here regarded as affording any justification for Germany's treaty violation, quite apart from the fact that that treaty violation was perpetrated *before* Germany had even discovered the documents which showed that such exchange of ideas had taken place.

The tactless and irritating pro-German agitation in this country, carried on by German-Americans under the auspices of German emissaries and partly initiated by them, has done much to consolidate in the opposite

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sense sentiment amongst non-hyphenated Americans. So have certain episodes in Germany's conduct of the war, and the manifestation of fanaticism and arrogance, amounting almost to megalomania, which characterize the several collective proclamations issued by German's leading educators, scientists and literary men.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Y.

## THE REPLY FROM GERMANY

Berlin, April 27, 1915.

Dear Y.:

My best thanks for your letter of the 22nd March. This interchange of opinion with you is to me extraordinarily interesting and valuable, although our correspondence thus far does not conduce to the hope that we shall reach an agreement.

That you do full justice to the success which has attended the peaceful labours of Germany is only what I had expected. Is not that success in itself a proof that Germany did not want the war? It was neither in accordance with the tendencies of our leading men, nor with the wishes of our people, who, during the last decade have, as you yourself emphasize, done great things and achieved

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great results through peaceful labour. Considered, therefore, from our point of view, the war cannot be looked upon as something which could have been avoided either by the good intentions or by the skill and wisdom of our government.

You say:

“The blood-guilt for this horrible war is laid at Germany’s door. The large majority of Americans believe that if, at the critical moment, she had thrown her sword into the scale for the preservation of peace, no nation on earth would have dared to begin the war.”

To me it is incomprehensible how America can have come to this point of view; indeed, my conviction is that the German Government’s publications prove exactly the contrary, namely, that this war broke out because Russia arbitrarily and deliberately provoked it and because the British Government

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committed the grave error, during a number of years, of encouraging jingo-militarist tendencies in Russia and France.

As a matter of fact, the actual responsibility for this fearful war rests on the Russian Panslavists and the party of the Grand Dukes, who have long been agitating for war with Germany and Austria. And the moral responsibility remains with Asquith, Grey and Churchill, who have been aiming, by means of secret political and military understandings with Russia, France, and even with Belgium, to hamper the development of Germany. And finally there enters the spirit of English naval militarism, whose purpose, by means of her powerful fleet, is to force England's will upon the whole world.

Do not forget that Germany is the only great power who has kept the peace

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during the last forty-four years without conquest of any territory whatsoever by force of arms.

During this period England has annihilated the Boer Republic and made Egypt an English colony. Russia has not only made war on Japan for Manchuria and Korea, but she has also annexed, with England's support, the whole of the North of Persia and has established herself in Mongolia. America has forcibly deprived Spain of her colonies. France has acquired Tunis and Morocco by force of arms, and Italy has conquered Tripoli.

In the face of all such facts, the responsibility for this war is to be laid at Germany's door!

I presume that you have read the German White Book, as well as the various Books of the other governments. This surely proves how strenuous were

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the efforts of the German Government up to the very last moment, to preserve peace. The telegrams which the German Emperor exchanged with the Czar and the King of England testify to this. The sudden order for the mobilization of the entire Russian Army necessarily brought these endeavors to an abrupt conclusion.

You say that it was not necessary for Germany thereupon immediately to declare war. That is exactly the mistake which is so frequently made in foreign countries. Germany could *not* calmly wait while Russia mobilized her powerful and, as the present war proves, her almost inexhaustible army. She would then have been crushed between the armies of the East and West. She was bound to endeavor to make up to some extent at least, by the rapidity of her military operations, the vast inferiority

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in the number of men she and Austria could put in the field against Russia and France.

With regard to Belgium, so much untruth has been disseminated by the press of hostile countries, that I feel myself unable to contradict and disprove specifically the mass of misleading statements. But again I say that Grey is primarily responsible for the frightful misfortune which has come upon that country.

The English Blue Book proves that the King of Belgium had asked the King of England to intervene diplomatically for the preservation of Belgian integrity. In reply Edward Grey requested the Belgian Government to oppose Germany by force of arms. In this way, he drove the Belgians into a war which they quite evidently had wished to avoid.

What would have happened to Belgium had she allowed the Germans to

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march through her country unopposed, as the German Government demanded?

The German troops would have passed through Belgium. No harm would have come to the people. The country would afterwards have received full compensation for any damage done, as in the case of Luxemburg. But that did not suit Grey's purpose!

You say rightly that the German march through Belgium took place before the discovery of the documents disclosing the agreements which Belgium had made with France and England. It is true that the march into Belgium was considered by the Germans as a military necessity.

It *was* such, in view of the uncertain attitude of the Belgian Government which had, as a matter of fact, long since forfeited claim to neutrality by secret understandings with France and

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England. That such understandings existed was a fact known to the German Government *before the outbreak of the war*. I admit we were not informed as to the wording, or as to the extent of significance of these understandings. Nevertheless no German general should have taken on himself the responsibility of exposing the German Army to a sudden advance of French and English troops through Belgium. That would have resulted in the annihilation of the German Army.

I admit that the methods of our American emissaries—as also the statements of all sorts of professors and similar spokesmen—were not very happily chosen. But with many of us there was a strong feeling that something must be done to counteract the monstrous, fantastic lies of the English press. I should have preferred if we had taken no

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steps at all along these lines and had rested on the eminently true remark of old General Schlieffen, that: "in war, after all, the only thing that matters is those silly old victories."

One thing, however, is beyond all question: Not German militarism, but the militarism of the Powers of the Entente Cordiale and English navalism are responsible for the frightful catastrophe which has come upon the world.

There is, in fact, no such thing as German militarism. There is only an undivided German nation, absolutely determined to fight till victory has been achieved over the Powers, who have united in hate and envy to destroy Germany.

There is no dissension between the German Government and the German people. The latter are fully aware whose is the guilt for this war. The knowledge

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of how large a share of this guilt rests on England's shoulders causes Germany's feelings at present to be anything but complacent toward her. Moreover, a very long time must elapse before she forgets the crime which England committed.

The German people understand perfectly that racial animosity might have brought about a conflict between Russia and Germany in which France would not desert her ally. But the participation of England in a war of annihilation against a people descended from her own stock—a war in which she has called to her aid Japanese, Indians, etc., etc., against an European nation—that is felt by Germany to be a shameful crime against civilization and humanity, which will go down in history as a stain on the reputation of England.

This also will not lightly be forgotten in Germany—that the war is really

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being carried on to-day by America. That country, in order that some of her industries may reap financial benefit, is supplying the whole war material for the allied armies, while she complacently submits to being prevented by the allies from supplying Germany. Such weakness, which America attempts to cover up by calling it "neutrality," will not be without its consequences, either in Germany or in other countries.

I join with you in sincerely hoping that we shall soon be delivered from the curse of this frightful war, although I do not believe that such delivery will come to us in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) X.

## THE AMERICAN REJOINDER

New York, June 28, 1915.

Dear X.:

Many thanks for your very interesting letter of April 27th. The spirit which animates Germany is indeed a great and mighty one. It is a spirit of unity and brotherhood among her people, of willing sacrifice and heroic striving, coupled with the passionate conviction and faith that her cause is just and righteous, that it must and will win, and that not only is victory a necessity for national existence, but that in its train it will bring blessings to the whole of the universe.

Wherever and whenever in the world's history such a spirit—born of the stirring of the profoundest depths of national or religious feeling—has manifested itself,

it has invariably been attended by a more or less marked fanaticism among the people concerned; by a condition of mind easily comprehensible as a psychological phenomenon, yet acutely prejudicial to the ability to preserve an objective point of view, and to arrive at an impartial judgment.

It is but natural that in the atmosphere which surrounds you and under existing circumstances, a man even of such sober, clear and independent mentality as yourself, should think and feel in the way manifested by your letter. Even if it were in my power, I would not try *at this time* to shake your faith, as I would never think to attempt to disturb the faith of a religious man. Since, however, you ask me to continue this exchange of opinion, and because I am so certain that my views and arguments cannot affect the firmness of your con-

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victions *at present* or modify the intensity of your patriotic feelings, I will endeavor further to make plain to you my ideas as to this most deplorable and accursed war.

The views I am expressing are, I believe, the views as well of the great majority of thinking people in America. And I would remind you that America as a whole, by reason of the racial composition of her population, is essentially free from national prejudice or racial bias. With her many millions of inhabitants of German origin, her disposition could not be anti-German in the ordinary course of affairs—and indeed never was so before the war.

With her millions of Jews and her liberal tendencies she cannot be pro-Russian. With her historical development in the course of which her only serious wars have been fought against

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England (which country, moreover, during certain critical periods in the Civil War between North and South, evidenced inclination to favor the South) and for many other reasons, her disposition cannot be that of an English partisan—and was not so before the war.

The predominant sentiment of the American people in the Boer war was strongly anti-English; in the Balkan War their sympathies were pro-Turkish; in the Italian-Turkish War, anti-Italian; in the Russo-Japanese War, pro-Japanese, although it was fully realized that from the point of view of America's material and national interests, the strengthening of Japan was hardly desirable.

It may sound to you very improbable, yet it is none the less true, that America, of all the great nations, is probably the

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one least swayed by eagerness to attain material advantage for herself through her international policies. I do not claim that this arises necessarily from any particular virtue in her people. It may be rather the result of her geographical and economic situation.

Although not a land as yet of the highest degree of culture, America is a land of high and genuine humanitarianism and of a certain naive idealism. Witness the return to China of the indemnity growing out of the Boxer Rebellion. To Spain, conquered and helpless, she paid, entirely of her own free will, \$20,000,000 for the Philippines. She refused to annex Cuba. In spite of strong provocation she abstained from taking Mexico.

I hear your ironic rejoinder, "and out of pure humanitarianism, you supply

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arms to our enemies, and *thus prolong the war.*”

The answer lies in the accentuation of the last four words, which can only mean that, but for the American supply of arms, the Allies, from lack of ammunition, would speedily be defeated, *i. e.*, America is to co-operate in preserving for that country which has most extensively and actively prepared for war, the full and lasting advantage of that preparation.

That would put a premium on war preparations—on an armed and therefore necessarily precarious peace—since it is but human nature that, given a difference which he considers serious enough for ground of a quarrel, a man armed to the teeth would be less inclined to settle the matter peaceably than one who is not so well prepared for a fight.

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Apart from this, the German complaint about the prolongation of the war through the American supply of arms is proof in itself that the refusal of such supplies would constitute a positive act of partiality in favor of Germany.

And the great majority of Americans are convinced that the ruling powers of Germany and Austria, though not perhaps the people themselves, are responsible for the outbreak of the war; that they have sinned against humanity and justice; that at least France and England did not want war; that therefore its advent found them in a comparatively unprepared state, and that it would constitute a decided, serious and unjustifiable action of far-reaching effect *against the Allies* if America were to put an embargo on war munitions. Especially so in view of the fact that as a

direct consequence of the treaty-defying invasion of Belgium you are in possession of the Belgian arms factories and iron mines and of about 75% of all the ore-producing capacity of France.

For neutrals to supply war materials to belligerents is an ancient, unquestioned right, recognized by international law and frequently practiced by yourselves. To alter, during the course of a war, a practice sanctioned by the law of nations and hitherto always followed, would constitute a flagrant breach of neutrality, in that it would necessarily help one side and harm the other.

The fact that at one time we forbade the export of arms to Mexico affords no argument in favor of the German contention, for there it was not a question of war between nations, but of civil war. There was here, too, the danger that such arms might eventually be used

against America herself, given the possibility that intervention by us in Mexico might later on become necessary.

Commissions from Germany for the supply of arms would have been as acceptable to our factories as were the Allies'. It is not America's fault if the German fleet does not break through the British cordon and open the way for sea communication with Germany. The superiority of the British fleet and the resulting consequences must have been known to Germany before she permitted the outbreak of this horrible war. She has no more right to make a grievance of these consequences than the Allies have a right to complain of Germany's superior preparedness and the greater perfection of her instruments of war.

To believe American public opinion influenced by the profits which come to this country from the supply of arms, is

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to misunderstand completely the American mode of thought and feeling. Moreover these profits go to very few pockets, and public opinion here being anything but unduly complacent towards large corporations and capitalists, is by no means inclined to view with favor the gathering in of these huge profits by a very limited number of individuals and concerns.

### ON THE IDEA THAT "NOTHING MATTERS BUT SUCCESS"

You quote with approval General von Schlieffen's remark that "in war, after all, the only thing that matters is those silly old victories."

You would surely not say that in the individual's daily struggle for existence or in competitive industrial strife, "the only thing that matters" is success. Rather you would be the first to grant as you have always demonstrated in

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your acts, that there are certain ethical limitations laid down by the conscience and the moral conceptions of humanity, which must be respected in the struggle for success, however keen, even though the very existence of the individual and the maintenance of wife and child be at stake.

Schlieffen's utterance throws overboard everything that civilization and the humanitarian progress of centuries has accomplished towards lessening the cruelty, the hatred and the suffering engendered by war, and towards protecting non-combatants, as far as possible, from its terrors. It is tantamount to the doctrine of the fanatical Jesuit: "The end justifies the means."

And it is something akin to this very doctrine which Germany has made her own and applied in her conduct of this war as she has done in none of her

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previous wars. *The conviction that everything, literally everything, which tends to insure victory is permitted to her, and indeed called for, has now evidently assumed the power of a national obsession.* Thus, the violation of innocent Belgium in defiance of solemn treaty; the unspeakable treatment inflicted on her people; the bombardment, without warning, of open places (which Germany was the first to practice); the destruction of great monuments of art which belonged to all humankind, as in Rheims, and Louvain; the Lusitania horror, the strewing of mines broadcast, the use of poisonous gases causing death by torture or incurable disease; the taking of hostages; the arbitrary imposition of monetary indemnities and penalties, etc. It is these facts that the non-combatant nations charge against Germany. And quite apart from the

responsibility for the war, it is in them that may be found the main reason why public opinion in neutral countries has more and more turned against Germany as the war has continued.

I say "innocent Belgium," for it is entirely evident that the Belgian-English pour-parlers, of which Germany discovered documentary evidence, *related merely to the eventuality of Germany's violating her neutrality* and therefore in no way constituted a relinquishment of neutrality on Belgium's part. *In so far as these pour-parlers did not keep strictly within these limits* (manifestly as a result of excessive zeal on the part of the English military attache in question) *they were formally and categorically rejected and disavowed, by both the Belgian and English Governments.* This is shown by official papers which have been pub-

lished. It cannot be doubted that these proceedings of disavowal were entirely *bona fide*, for they took place at a time and under circumstances such that no one could possibly have imagined that the correspondence evidencing them would ever see the light of day.

Germany's reasoning that she was compelled to take the initiative in violating the treaty of neutrality in order to avoid the imminent danger that England and France would do so first and thereupon advance troops against her through Belgium, is, even if such reasoning were morally admissible, no valid argument; for, only a few days before, England and France had solemnly pledged themselves before the whole world to respect Belgium's neutrality.

If, as you believe, England had been planning for years to attack Germany via Belgium, would she not then have

had in readiness an invading force somewhere near adequate for such an undertaking? Instead she had the mere bagatelle of 75,000 or 100,000 men, which in the first months of the war actually constituted her whole available continental fighting force.

To any one of unprejudiced judgment there remains, therefore, no choice but the conclusion that Germany's violation of Belgium was not a necessary measure of protection for herself, but, as the Chancellor in fact admitted in his first speech on the subject in the Reichstag, was undertaken simply because "in war the only thing that matters is those silly old victories."

Not as you say, in obedience to England's command (what power had England either to command or enforce her commands?), but from a compelling impulse of national honor did Belgium

oppose the German breach of neutrality with force of arms, though it would evidently have been to her material interest to comply with Germany's summons or at any rate to offer merely nominal resistance.

Holland and Switzerland would have done the same thing under similar circumstances, as would any other self-respecting nation. Moreover, what weight could Belgium attach to Germany's promise of immunity in case she yielded, when at the very moment Germany, by her own act, was demonstrating but too clearly how little she considered herself bound by her promise or indeed by a solemn international treaty?

What the Germans have accomplished on the battlefields, as well as within their own country, is proof of such great national qualities, that it compels the tribute of admiration, even from your

enemies. These qualities would indeed have gone far to justify her claim to hegemony, had they not been linked unfortunately—at least among your ruling classes and intellectual leaders—with ways of thought and action which are anti-humanitarian, oppressive and generally intolerable to the rest of the world.

ON THE GERMAN DOCTRINE OF  
FRIGHTFULNESS

The theory of “frightfulness” in the conduct of warfare which Germany now preaches and practices is no new discovery. On the contrary it is a very ancient one—so old, in fact, that long ago it had come to be discarded and superseded in European warfare and passed into the limbo of forgotten things. There, until resurrected by your countrymen, it lay for generations, along with much else which the human race had

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overcome and left behind in the progress of culture and humanity—a progress achieved by strenuous toil, sacrifices and suffering in the course of many centuries.

Such words and ideas are met with contempt and derision by your spokesmen and termed mere phrases and sentimentality. *If these are mere phrases then the whole upward struggle of the world for endless years past has been based upon and aiming at phrases and sentimentality.*

I read recently an article in a German paper written by one of your professors of international law, in which he maintained evidently quite unconscious of the incredible monstrosity of his logic that, because the Russians in their invasion of East Prussia had acted like barbarians, you therefore had the unquestioned right, as a measure of re-

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prisal, to bombard and destroy Oxford and Cambridge!

And what have you gained from your "frightfulness?" Your victories have been due to quite other qualities. By your "frightfulness" you have steeled your enemies to the utmost limit of sacrifice; you have embittered neutral opinion; you have disappointed and grieved your friends and "sown dragon's teeth," the offspring of which will arise against you many years even after the conclusion of peace.

How differently would you be judged now if you had tempered your mighty power with mercy and self-restraint; if with the consciousness and use of superior strength and ability you had coupled chivalry and generosity!

You say that Germany is the only great power which has kept the peace for forty-four years, and made no con-

## *The American Rejoinder*

quest of territory of any kind by force of arms. It is pertinent to recall in reference to this statement, that in the course of these forty-four years Germany virtually by force has taken a strategically important piece of China, waged war against the Hereros and annexed colonies in Africa and in the Pacific (receiving in exchange for one of them the strategically most valuable island of Heligoland). Yet, speaking generally, the world is bound to recognize with gratitude and admiration that from 1871 to 1914 Germany has refrained from using her enormous military power in attempts at conquest.

Has she had cause to complain of the results of this wise and farseeing policy?

During that comparatively short space of time she had grown more powerful than any other country. In the well-being of her people, in her wealth and

prestige she had advanced and flourished as no other nation. Her industries, her merchant marine had brought her conquest and triumph unequalled in the world's economic history, which find a parallel only in the wonderful military achievements of the Napoleonic era.

Without firing a gun she practically had turned Holland and Belgium into German dependencies. She had achieved predominance in Turkey and established a firm footing in Asia Minor. Her influence in South America and Asia was increasing by leaps and bounds. Even in the British colonies the victorious efficiency of the German commercial conquerors was more and more making itself felt.

And as to this newly discovered naval militarism of England which, you say, "is seeking to force England's will upon the whole world by the force of her

## *The American Rejoinder*

mighty fleet," what has it ever done to bar the way to your commerce? Absolutely nothing. A few days ago I read a letter of an American traveler, from which I quote the following extracts:

"Not many years ago I sat on the club veranda at Singapore and counted twenty-five funnels of a single German steamer line. From Singapore I went to North Borneo; there was but one line, a German, and that line carried the British mail. Later I went to Siam from Singapore. It was on a steamer of this same German line, carrying British mail. There was no other. Thence I went to Hongkong by the same excellent German line. Later I went to Australia—it was by one of this same line. To Java and the Eastern Archipelago, to Penang—it was always this vast German company, doing not only all the German, but the British mail service as well. The German traders, with whom I mixed freely, marveled at the infantile generosity with which Great Britain opened all her ports to German enterprise, although longheaded people shook their heads at the thought of German skippers having a better acquaintance with British waters than their own people.

"Nowhere in the British colonial world have

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I found the slightest evidence of commercial monopoly and certainly no favoring of Englishmen at the expense of Germans. Even in India the German commercial traveler has roamed at will and driven Englishmen out of business under the very noses of the Calcutta Council.

“In the Imperial German colonies competing English traders have been treated to a systematic course of petty official restrictions so vexatious that finally they have given up the attempt to do business under German conditions. When I was in German New Guinea this official persecution went so far that a British trading steamer was even forbidden to get water in order to force it to abandon trade with the natives of that neighborhood.

“Some British colonies do now discriminate in favor of the mother country, but the colonies who do that are self-governing and therefore beyond the mother country’s control in economic matters, like Canada. But in so-called Crown colonies like Hongkong, the German trader has the same advantage as any other.”

*England has not abused her power at sea, at least since the eighteenth century, any more than you, previous to this present war, have abused your power on*

The American Rejoinder

land. Not only has she not stood in the way of your development, but on the contrary *she has given you fair and free access to her markets, with unparalleled liberality.*

ENGLAND'S SEA BLOCKADE  
OF GERMANY

That England should now make every endeavor to carry on a strict sea blockade against Germany and should do so in a manner which takes account of the existing circumstances and novel instruments of naval warfare, is, in the opinion of our leading lawyers, her perfect right, as far at least as it is a matter only between her and Germany. In the same way the North, during the four years of the American Civil War, did all in her power compatible with the law of nations to prevent, both directly and indirectly, export and import traffic through Southern harbors.

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It is true that dissatisfaction has been caused in this country by the interference of England with American commerce. In fact such dissatisfaction is on the increase and is likely to lead in the early future to a vigorous protest on the part of our Government. But the objections to England's practice in no wise depend on any idea of questioning the right under international law of a complete and effective blockade.

To call this perfectly natural and legitimate and frequently practiced measure of warfare "a war of starvation" against women and children is a good deal of an exaggeration. Though inconvenienced, you are very far from the danger of starvation. Indeed, all your spokesmen not only admit this fact but defiantly proclaim it.

That against that blockade as well as for the destruction of English commerce

## The American Rejoinder

you are making use of your amazingly perfected submarines appears to me entirely justified, *so long as in that use you keep within the limits of legitimate warfare.* Nor do I deny that England, in certain respects, has arbitrarily and it seems rather fatuously interfered with the rights of neutrals; that she has employed against you some irritating measures of petty and apparently purposeless chicanery and given you cause for resentment by certain vindictive and perhaps unfair provisions and procedures enacted at the very start of the war against German firms and German interests within English jurisdiction.

It must also, I believe, be admitted that you were justified in looking upon some of the edicts of the boastful Winston Churchill, with reference to the conduct of English merchant vessels, as provocations which gave you legitimate ground

## The American Rejoinder

for retaliation within recognized limitations.

But that Germany should have used these provocations and this phrase of "starvation warfare," as a basis for *reprisals which actually do constitute warfare against women and children, is a blow in the face to the world's conscience.*

Against England's infringements of the strict limits of neutral rights and against the subjecting of neutrals to certain unjust, irritating and rather senseless annoyances, America has not failed to protest. She has in several cases received satisfaction and acceptable assurances. She should, and, I have no doubt, she will insist firmly on her rights in the cases still under discussion. But—and that makes the vast difference between the English and German infractions of the rights of neutrals—*in no single case have such acts on*

## The American Rejoinder

*the part of England involved the sacrifice of a human life.*

You say that Germany is not responsible for the war. It is nevertheless a fact that it was Germany who first *declared* war. Perhaps it would have come even if not declared by Germany, but in that "perhaps" lies a fearful burden of responsibility.

You speak of the vast "Austro-German inferiority" in fighting men, as compared to France and Russia, which you had to counteract by rapidity and initiative of proceeding.

First, this inferiority of your 120 millions to the Franco-Russian 200 millions (the English, *at that time*, could not have entered into your reckoning) is not such a "vast" one, even on paper, when one considers how many millions of the Russians could not for many months be included in the reckoning, in

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consequence of the huge distances separating them from the scene of action.

Secondly, you had the enormous advantage of strategic railroads, which the Russians lacked.

Thirdly, you and the Austrians occupying contiguous territory and holding the inner lines were able to move your troops from East to West, and *vice versa*, as occasion demanded, while the Russians and French were separated and had to fight on the outer lines; and

Fourthly, every one knows that in modern warfare far less depends on the number of men than on preparation, leadership and ammunition. And that in these respects the Russians certainly, and at the outset also the French, labored under a "vast inferiority" is not open to question.

*It cannot be admitted therefore that the fact of the Russian mobilization*

## The American Rejoinder

made it a necessity for you to precipitate war, especially on the very day when Austria, who was in a far more exposed position than you, declared herself ready at last, notwithstanding the Russian mobilization, to enter into direct diplomatic discussion with Russia.

### SIR EDWARD GREY'S EFFORTS TO PRESERVE PEACE

On the 30th and 31st of July, respectively, Sir Edward Grey telegraphed as follows to the English ambassador in Berlin for transmission to the Imperial Chancellor:

“\* \* \* You should speak to the Chancellor in the above sense, and add most earnestly that one way of maintaining good relations with England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe. If we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object his Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and good will.

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“And I will say this: If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavor will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, *but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.*

“I said to the German Ambassador this morning that if Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris, and go to the length of saying that if Russia and France would not accept it, his Majesty’s Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences; otherwise, I told the

## The American Rejoinder

German Ambassador, that if France became involved we should be drawn in."

Is this the language of one seeking a quarrel? Why did not Germany act upon the suggestions put forth so urgently, ringing so manifestly true and bearing so evidently the stamp of good faith? Why was the calamity of war thrust upon the world in such hot haste, that you did not even previously inform, far less consult, your then allies, the Italians, in spite of the provisions of the Triple Alliance?

Is it not proved by declarations of Giolotti—certainly no enemy to Germany—before the Italian Parliament some six months back, that *Austria wanted to make war as much as two years ago?* I know sufficient of the sentiment prevailing in England and France before the war, as well as of the tendencies of the political leaders and

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other leading men in those countries, to be absolutely positive that, apart from a few individuals given to noisemaking, but not possessing weight or real influence, neither France nor England wanted war.

On the other hand, I agree with you in believing that the Pan-Slavist party in Russia did plan to bring on war. However, they did not want it *yet* and it is altogether doubtful whether they would have succeeded in their design had they been met by a firm, wise and conciliatory policy on the part of Germany and Austria.

These opponents (the Russians), *by themselves*, as results thus far have shown, and as seemed evident in advance to sober observers, you need never to have considered as your peers in a military sense.

Rather than take the awful respon-

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sibility of initiating war, and thus uniting England, France and Russia wholeheartedly against you, you could well have afforded, in calm confidence in your superior efficiency and preparation, to take the lesser risk of letting the Russians come on whenever, in fatuous arrogance, they might have believed themselves strong enough to tackle you and Austria.

In an offensive war, undertaken by Russia, France would have joined, if at all, only half-heartedly, and with her public opinion strongly divided. No English Government, however jingo-militarist, could have obtained the sanction of Parliament to take part in such a war. Your ally, Italy, would in that case not have forsaken you. Public opinion and moral support of the neutral nations would have been strongly with you. You would presumably,

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under such circumstances, have given the Russians a bad beating, and the world in general would have rejoiced exceedingly at the aggressor's discomfiture.

That the large majority of the people of Germany did not want war, I do not doubt, although (*as was not the case in England and France*) there has been in existence in your country for years a rather alarmingly active and influential party whose open aim was war, and particularly a reckoning with England.

Many of your intellectuals and particularly many of the teachers of your youth, had come to preach the deification of sheer might. They proclaimed with fanatical arrogance the doctrine that the German nation being the chosen people, superior to all others, was therefore not only permitted, but, indeed, called upon, to impose the blessings of

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its civilization and "Kultur" upon other countries, by force if necessary, and to help itself to such of their possessions as it deemed necessary for the fulfillment of its destiny.

I believe it is not too much to say that that doctrine and the spirit which bred it are very much akin, in their intolerance, self-righteous assumption of a world-improving mission, lack of understanding of and contemptuous disallowance for the differing viewpoints, qualities and methods of others, to the doctrines and the spirit that lay at the bottom of the religious wars throughout the long and evil years when Catholics and Protestants killed one another and wrought appalling bloodshed, destruction and ruin, for the purpose of conferring upon their respective countries the blessings of "the true religion."

Liberal press organs and calm-think-

## The American Rejoinder

ing men in Germany frequently before the war expressed their disapproval of, and misgivings at such preachings and the tendencies and agitation of the jingo party, though naturally you now all stand together and have put aside for the time being the party differences and conflicting opinions and points of view which prevailed prior to the war.

I agree with you in believing notwithstanding the machinations of the war party, that the Kaiser and the Chancellor, up to a certain fatal moment, when they yielded their judgments to others, meant, *bona fide* to preserve peace. I am quite persuaded as well that the mass of the German people did not want war and are entirely honest in their unanimous belief that Germany is not responsible for the war, although, unfortunately, the *facts* prove the contrary.

It is conceivable that you might have

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been justified in coming forward boldly and straightforwardly and saying to the Triple Entente:

“We are 70 million strong; we have demonstrated to the world our capabilities in every department of human endeavor and human achievement. We require (or, at least, our people believe, rightly or wrongly, that we require) wider territorial scope for our national development than we possess in our own country and in our colonies. We require, too, an assurance of greater security as to the conditions of our national existence.

“You have pre-empted the best part of the world. It is far more than you require. Either see that an appropriate provision is made for us, or, failing that, give us a free hand to conclude mutually agreeable arrangements with Belgium, Portugal or Holland with respect to their over-sea possessions.

“You will then find us ready to conclude an understanding with you, in order to ensure peace and to make an end, at least, to these continually recurring alarms of war, which are wearing out the nerves and the purse of the whole world. To this end let us call a conference. Meanwhile, no one is to increase the armaments they at present possess, let alone mobilize. But if you are not willing to give us a fair show peaceably, then we warn you look out for trouble.”

In my opinion, such a warning would not have had to be translated into action, for in due course things were bound to come your way by the very force of cause and effect. With a little skill and tact and insight (which traits, as you will probably admit, have hardly been outstanding features of German diplomacy since Bismarck), together with a little patience, everything you could reason-

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ably ask would have been yours in the course of the next ten or fifteen years.

But if the Triple Entente had met a request in the nature of the foregoing with a "non possumus," or had made no reasonably acceptable offer, and you, after final warning had resorted to the arbitrament of war, your case would have worn a very different aspect from the present one. Many unprejudiced men amongst neutral people would have looked upon your viewpoints and conduct as not devoid of justification, instead of turning away with disgust from the sophistries of your writers, who seek to demonstrate that you poor innocent lambs were fallen upon in order to be dragged to the slaughter-house.

As a matter of fact, however, it is my belief that such a declaration delivered by you to the Triple Entente, firm and determined in spirit and meaning, but

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friendly and persuasive in language, would have led not to war, but to a lasting understanding.

### SUMMARY

To sum up:

(1) Until ten years ago, England's relations with you were good —indeed more than good, as is shown, for instance, by the cession of Heligoland. If, as you assert, hate and envy and ill-will, because of Germany's phenomenal development, and of her increasing strength and push as a competitor in the markets of the world, had been the moving force in shaping England's attitude towards you, the motive for hostile conduct would have existed at that time just as at present.

As a matter of fact, England's sentiment towards Germany changed only with your aggressive program of naval

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construction, and as a consequence of the manifestation in word, in writing and in deed, of certain alarming and menacing tendencies, to which, it is true, more significance and importance probably were attached abroad than in Germany itself—more, perhaps, than they deserved.

*That program England came to consider, naturally, as directed mainly against herself and as a serious menace to her most vital interests and to the conditions of her very existence.*

Would not Germany have become uneasy had Russia suddenly announced a policy of concentrating an enormous fleet in the Baltic? (The parallel, though, is far from perfect, in that for you, sea power is not nearly as vital an element as it is and must be for England.)

Your naval policy, together with the arguments which the German Govern-

ment's spokesmen adduced for it, and the above-mentioned manifestations and agitations, caused very serious and lasting apprehensions in England. They gradually drove her to the Entente with France, and through it, unfortunately perhaps, but necessarily, also with Russia, though not as an offensive, but as a defensive measure.

Let me say, in parenthesis, that I have always felt inclined to doubt the wisdom of this grouping, in the interest of England and France and of the peace of the world, however comprehensible and natural it was under the circumstances. Likewise, I have always doubted the wisdom of the creation of your enormous fleet. A view which was shared by some of your best political thinkers and which results seem to justify.

2. The direct cause of the war lay in

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the fixed idea by which Austria was possessed, since Aehrenthals' laurels, that she could and ought to adopt a "dashing" policy. There is nothing more dangerous than the foolish and reckless daring of feebleness, when, as happens at times, it is suddenly seized with a mania for heroics.

In fact, as I gleaned from a letter received here a few days before the outbreak of the war and originating from a particularly authoritative source in Vienna, Austria entirely failed to realize the portentous significance and the inevitable consequences of her unheard-of ultimatum to Servia.

She believed that she would be left undisturbed to play the conqueror at the expense of that poor little country. Unfortunately, Germany did not see fit to put a stop to that extremely dangerous playing with fire. On the contrary,

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the German Ambassador in Vienna seems actively to have encouraged it.

3. When finally the crisis had come, with all its terrible meaning, Austria's nerves, at the very last moment, began to give way. She wavered in the face of a world catastrophe.

But your Junkers and other jingoes neither wavered nor hesitated. They saw in their grasp the opportunity for which they had been plotting these many years and they were not minded to let it escape them. They considered the moment peculiarly propitious because of the internal preoccupations of England and France.

And they succeeded in sweeping the German Government off its feet as well as the sober and sensible thinking majority of the German people. They succeeded in rushing your Government and people into the belief that the

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Russian mobilization signified a menace dangerous to Germany's very existence, and that every day of delay in meeting that danger might mean disastrous consequences.

This was not the first time that an attempt had been made by that party to bring the Kaiser and his people suddenly face to face with a situation which they meant should spell war—a war which they felt certain would end in a quick and decisive German victory. Of at least one flagrant example of such manoeuvring I have personal knowledge.

That the jingo party, against what I believe to have been the tendencies of the Kaiser's and the Chancellor's policies, thus succeeded at last in their fateful and atrocious design—although the manifest interests and, doubtless, the inclination of the masses of your

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people were for the maintenance of peace—is explainable only by the Germans' amazing lack of understanding for the deeper qualities, sentiments, ideals, modes of thought and characteristics of other nations as distinguished from their outward peculiarities, methods and habits.

This lack of understanding doubly amazing in a people so intelligent and instructed and so successful in its commercial dealings with the rest of the world is strikingly exemplified in your complete misjudgment as to the cohesive power of the British Empire and as to the loyalty of its component parts and subject races; by your gross underestimate of France *and by your general miscalculation as to how the peoples challenged by you would react to the supreme test of war.*

That Austria and Russia through

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their mobilizations and other measures originating from a mixture of bluff and fear, managed to get each other into an utterly unreasoning state of nerves, is entirely comprehensible. They did not trust each other, and above all, they did not trust themselves, their own strength and preparedness.

But Germany, in the knowledge of her powerful moral and military superiority, and of her incomparable war machine, perfect and ready in every detail, could have, and should have dominated the confusion and danger of the situation with the sang-froid and self-confidence born of strength, instead of allowing herself to be swept along by the sinister currents leading to an ocean of blood.

And if Germany, with trembling Europe hanging on her words, had proclaimed boldly "There shall be peace," and thus by her veto had saved the

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world from the curse of this war, she would not only have done a splendidly meritorious deed, unequalled in the world's history, which would have brought her immortal fame and would have been greeted by the joyous acclaim of all peoples, but she would have gained by that very act the uncontested leadership amongst the nations. From their gratitude for being freed from the nightmare of war's menace, she would readily have obtained (as intimated by Sir Edward Grey in his telegram) compliance with any reasonable demand she might have put forward for the extension of the scope of her development and influence.

4. Once the Entente existed it seems to me so obvious that England *in an aggressive war waged by Germany and Austria* against France and Russia *was bound to throw in her lot with the latter*

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country, that I was quite unable, at the time, to understand Germany's outburst of surprise and fury against England. Alliance or Entente, call it what you will —had England backed out in that crisis it would have been a miserable breach of faith on her part, by which she would have forfeited her place in the world's respect and which would have been bitterly resented by her former friends and left her completely isolated henceforth.

Moreover, apart from all moral obligations and the compelling force of political considerations, she could have felt all the less tempted to enter into a separate agreement with Germany at that critical juncture and remain neutral, as the latter at that very moment had demonstrated that she did not consider herself bound by any treaty, when military interests seemed to her to make the

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breach of such treaty advisable. In the face of Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality, how could England have felt assured that, if an arrangement between the two countries had been effected, it would be respected by Germany, in case at any given moment it might appear to the German government to be requisite from the point of view of military necessity or even mere advantage, to ignore such agreement?

You call it a hideous crime and eternal shame that the English "called to their aid" against you the Japanese and the Indians. As far as Japanese military aid is concerned, it has been practically limited to action in China, and thus has not to any material degree influenced the European war.

And with regard to the relatively inconsiderable number of Indians that England brought over, the simple fact

is that these few brigades or divisions form part of the small standing army that she possessed—the very smallness of which is further proof of how little she had contemplated war. In her critical situation, and with her great lack of trained troops, she called in these detachments which were commanded by English officers.

I feel certain that an unprejudiced judgment can see neither crime nor shame in that act. If there were, you would be no less subject to reproach for accepting the military aid of Turks and Arabs.

5. When a country in so short a time has made such unexampled progress as Germany, and through her own capacity and the favor of fate has achieved so much of wealth, power and well-being for her people, she can well afford to

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indulge in the luxury of modesty and a conciliatory disposition.

A country thus blessed ought to thank God that all is going so well with her, and should recognize that such brilliant success is bound to produce a certain amount of irritation and jealousy, just as it does in the case of an eminently successful individual.

While rejoicing in her achievement, she ought carefully to refrain from boasting or flaunting her superiority in the face of the world.

While unceasingly continuing to strive and build up, she ought to do so tactfully and with all possible consideration for her less successful neighbors.

She should know how to restrain herself and wisely to keep her ambitions within bounds, to live and let live; to regard without jealousy or envy, possessions which are the heritage of others

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less efficient than herself, and to leave it to time, slowly but surely, to do its work in rewarding merit and punishing inefficiency and sloth.

Have you thought and acted thus?

Have you not, on the contrary, in the justified consciousness of your greater efficiency and more strenuous effort allowed the fact of the great inherited advantages possessed by others to become a thorn in the flesh, and an ever rankling bitter grievance, which dimmed your contentment and soured the joy at your achievements?

Have you not estranged and affronted and antagonized other nations—not by success in open competition with them, which I grant was far from pleasing them, but to which in the end they had come to accommodate themselves as to an unavoidable evil—but by the manner and matter of your writing, speaking

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and acting? Have you not made such nations your enemies by thrusting before them aims and visions of the future, calculated to arouse in them most serious alarm and apprehension, and thus eventually caused them to unite against you—not, as you think, through envy or hate, but through the much more powerful motives of self-preservation, and of fear of your aims and intentions?

### HISTORY WILL PLACE THE GUILT OF A NEEDLESS WAR

In this letter, which, I am sorry to say, has assumed formidable proportions, I have tried faithfully to represent to you, as I see them, what are at present the predominant and controlling views and sentiments among the American people. I have met with much the same ideas among the great majority of neutrals with whom I have discussed the subject

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—neutrals from many countries whom I have met here in the last six months.

If I have expressed myself freely, possibly in some respects even bluntly, I hope you will make allowance for the honest and deep anger and grief that move me when I see how, through a needless war wantonly started, Germany and England-France, the three countries of Europe whom the world most needs, the three races from whom humanity has most to expect, are engaged in tearing each other to pieces in senseless fury.

I have welcomed with hope certain signs in the last few weeks which seem to indicate that more moderate, fairer and calmer sentiments, a more correct understanding, and more far-sighted views are beginning to get a foothold in certain circles in Germany.

You have so incontestably vindicated the prowess of your arms, and so im-

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pressively demonstrated the power, courage, self-sacrificing patriotism and high ability of your nation, that no possible suspicion can attach to you of yielding under compulsion, should you rise to the moral heroism of taking the first step towards dispelling the dreadful misery which weighs upon Europe through this appalling war.

What is done, is done. History will adjudge the guilt. Eleven months ago it was you who spoke the fateful word that meant war. Will it now be you to first speak the redeeming word that shall bring hope of peace?

Whether such a word from you—a word, not of victorious peace, but of righteous peace, a word of human feeling and of political moderation, of conciliation, aye, and of atonement where due—would now be listened to by your opponents, in view of their bitterness at

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your actions and their mistrust of your intentions, and would actually bring peace, I do not know.

But of this I am sure: that such a step would be welcomed with gratitude, gladness and sympathy by all at least of the non-combatant nations, and that it would be set down as a moral asset for you in the ledger both of history and of contemporary opinion. Nor can I doubt that, even regarded merely from the point of view of politics, it would be wise, well-judged and timely.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Y.

\* \* \*

NOTE: To this letter a short note merely of acknowledgment was received, containing the intimation that, in view of the wide divergence of views between the writer and the recipient, no useful purpose could be served by continuing the correspondence.

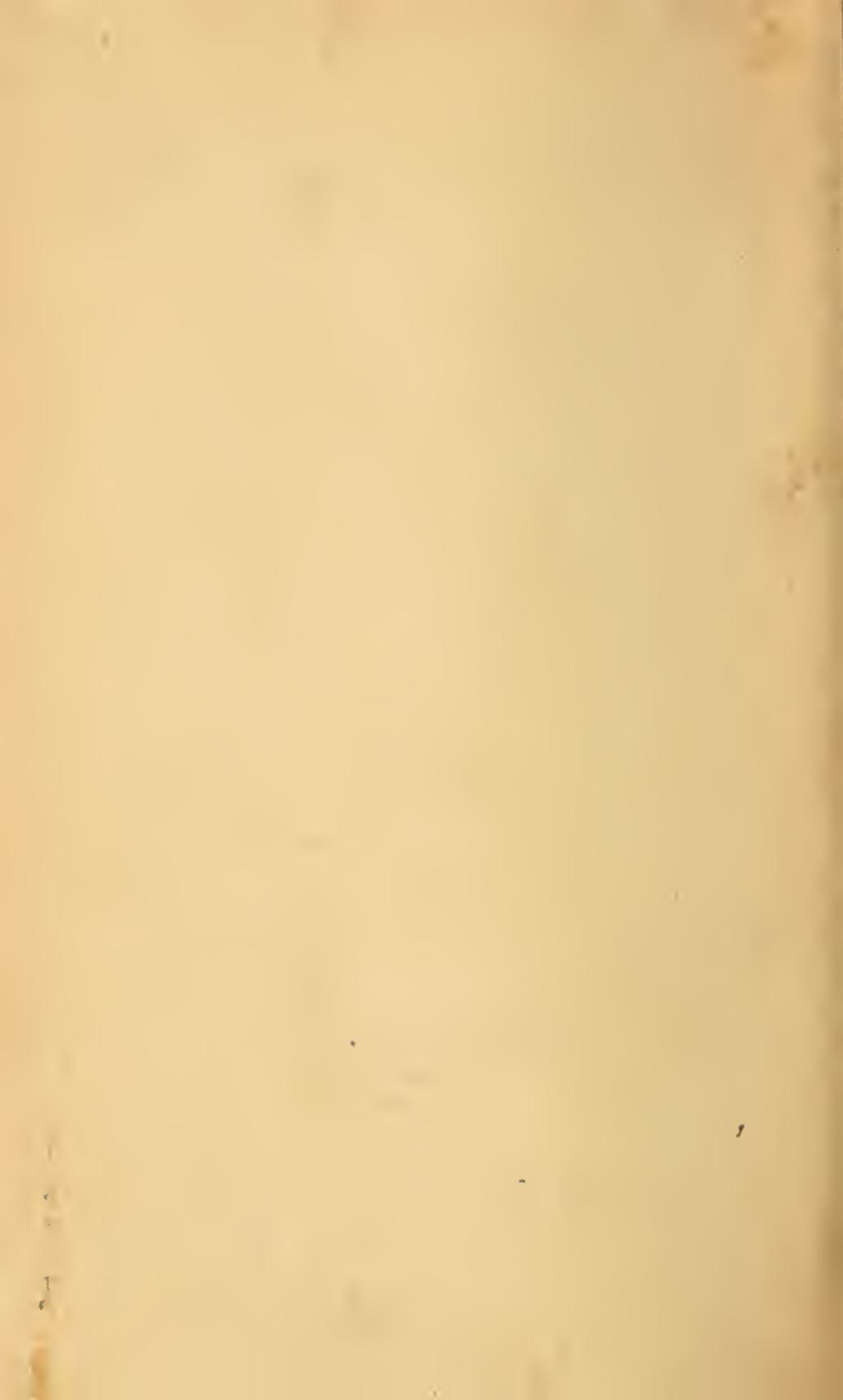














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